

# Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center



Architectural rendering of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center.

This 10,600 sq. ft. Exploration Center will be a model for sustainable, environmentally sensitive design, construction and operation. The Center will use a variety of strategies to achieve these goals, using the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design criteria.

## Location

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary management plan developed in 1992 identified a visitor center located adjacent to the sanctuary as a key program element. In 2002, the sanctuary contracted with AMS Planning and Research to identify potential locations and partners for a visitor center. Initially, 23 possible locations were evaluated, and four were selected for further detailed analysis. Public input on the four proposals, combined with recommendations from the MBNMS Sanctuary Advisory Council, led to the decision to locate the visitor center in the City of Santa Cruz.

## Collaboration

The National Marine Sanctuary Program and the City of Santa Cruz are collaborating in a public-private partnership to design, construct and outfit the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center. The city has been instrumental in providing a waterfront property next to its Beach Boardwalk, which attracts more than four million visitors annually. The city is also providing project management services.

## The Exploration Center and its Exhibits

An estimated 150,000 people per year are expected to visit the Exploration Center and be exposed to a unique, hands-on introduction to the diverse ecosystems of California's Central Coast. They will see how these ecosystems are studied and managed and why this is important to their own lives. The center will also provide greatly needed educational facilities for sanctuary users, visitors, educators and families; especially for minority and low-income populations.

The center will feature a variety of exhibits, a state of the art classroom, views of the ocean, administrative offices and a small theater. In order to complement other regional aquariums and science centers and avoid duplication, the center's exhibits will focus on ecosystems and large themes, rather than on live animals. Exhibit topics include watersheds and water quality; sanctuary geology and





Design sketch of the center's kelp forest exhibit.

science with hands-on demonstrations and a large-screen video of current research on Davidson seamount; family-oriented discovery areas for critical ecosystems like rocky shores, the intertidal zone, and majestic kelp forests; an introduction to migratory species; challenging decisions involved in protecting and sustaining the world's fish stocks and the role of marine protected areas; and deep-sea creatures and habitat. The closing section of the exhibits, "This is Your Sanctuary, Treat it Gently," will focus on opportunities to volunteer for the many different programs and projects offered by the sanctuary.

The center's classroom with seawater tanks will allow the sanctuary to share standards-based, educational programs in science, math, writing, and the arts, history and humanities with more K-12 students and their teachers. The new classroom will allow the sanctuary to offer a greater range of activities, plus easy access to exhibits, live video feeds, and the nearby shoreline. It will also be used in the evenings for special presentations and community events. Programs will be designed to complement the many offerings already available in the Santa Cruz area.

## Project Schedule

Program Phase	Schedule
Programmatic design	3/2004 – 6/2009
Initiate Building Construction	6/2010
Initiate Exhibit Construction Phase I	6/2010
Initiate Exhibit Construction Phase II	3/2011